

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT  
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

**FEELINGS OF ISOLATION**

**SEGMENT #3: PROFESSIONAL RENEWAL**



**VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT**



**PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**



**ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY**



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**The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute**

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FOR  
NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS

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# Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers



The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

# FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

## SEGMENT #3: PROFESSIONAL RENEWAL

### VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

**Feelings of Isolation:** Feeling lonesome, anxious, and alone in classroom with limited resources and assistance. Having no clear-cut recipe or "how to do it" guide to manage an unexpected problem; or fear related to appearing incompetent to peers.

Facilitator: Dr. [Tammy Milby](#), Reading Faculty  
Department of Teaching and Learning  
School of Education  
Virginia Commonwealth University

AUDIO	VIDEO
<p>Teacher empowerment describes activities which enhance the professional status of teachers (Browder, 1994). Great teachers are life-long learners who always reflect upon their own practices and incorporate changes in the classroom. Short and Rinehart (1992) conducted a research study on what makes teachers feel empowered. The study found six categories of empowerment including; decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. In other words, the most successful teachers continue to develop and grow in their own skills. Teachers who seek opportunities for changes in their own practices feel more empowered.</p> <p>Welcome to this program! My name is Dr. Tammy Milby. I am on the faculty in the Department of Teaching &amp; Learning at Virginia Commonwealth University. As you watch this segment, I will be discussing how to build professional renewal into your life as a teacher.</p> <p>As a new teacher, begin to evaluate your strengths and establish opportunities to collaborate with others who are passionate about teaching and learning.</p> <p>Time is always an issue, but the wealth of knowledge you gain and enhanced resources will really pay-off in the future. Why don't you consider participation in some of the following activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings of professional associations</li><li>• Conferences</li><li>• Peer observations</li><li>• Co-teaching opportunities</li><li>• Professional book discussion groups</li><li>• On-line teacher listserves</li><li>• Reading professional journals &amp; newsletters</li><li>• Reading professional books or websites</li><li>• Staff development workshops or events</li></ul>	<p><b>DR. MILBY</b></p>

Remember, masterful teachers transform their practices by personally valuing professional improvement. Start by selecting just one area to work on and you will develop your own action plan for professional success.

Next teachers will describe examples of how professional development activities have improved their classroom practices.

My name is Jamie Baumgardner. I teach English in a middle school. This is my fourth year of teaching but my first year in Henrico County. Education is constantly changing and teachers must change with education. This is why professional development is so important to the career of a teacher. My school division offers many opportunities for professional development. It is the teacher's job to get educated and use what was learned in his or her classroom. In my 3 and a half years of teaching in two states, I have had many beneficial professional development courses and workshops. I have done CHAMPS (Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation) classroom management. I have also chaired the Responsible Discipline Process committee. Through these seminars and workshops, I learned many techniques to better manage my classroom. This doesn't mean that everything I learned at a seminar or workshop will work in my classroom. I need to try those techniques I think will help in order to determine what works best for my students.

Some of the workshops and seminars I have attended include technology, reading in the content areas, and vertical teaming. Presently, I am involved in the "Laying the Foundation" process in my school division. Teachers in eighth through twelfth grades are trained in pre-AP techniques. This training is for all students and not just advanced students. There is a theory that if students are taught at an advanced level they will perform at an advanced level. I am applying some of the techniques that I have learned in my classroom. I know that some will be more effective than others. I am in the process of learning what works and how to adapt lessons to make techniques work with my students.

I am thankful that professional development opportunities are provided. I feel that overall they have been beneficial.

My name is William Berry. I am a second year social studies teacher at Tuckahoe Middle School. I have been involved in a number of professional development activities over the past year and a half. Some of these have been very beneficial activities while I've seen others as being completely worthless at the time.

One particular development session I went to was called 'History Alive.' I took this course with about 30 other history teachers in the summer before my first full year of teaching. The course taught us how to engage students in activities rather than focus on teacher-oriented learning strategies. I picked up a number of ideas from this seminar. Seminars, such as this one, are also very nice due the fact that you receive quite a bit of SWAG (Stuff We All Get). From the History Alive conference, I received a large book full of colored maps, pictures, and classroom activities that I plan to use throughout my teaching career.

Some professional development activities which you'll view as completely worthless at the time may have unanticipated value. When your school schedules a professional development

**JAMIE  
BAUMGARDNER**

**WILLIAM BERRY**

activity day when you have a pile of papers on your desk that could fill a dumpster, you question the purpose of these activities. And sometimes, it's alright to question. Even in these situations, you can often grow professionally. I advise you to take this time away from your classroom and your students to talk to teachers who share your content area, who are known for their great classroom management, or for making great connections with their students. Some days you'll accomplish more on your one hour lunch break by having conversations with these experienced teachers, than you will in the other 7 hours of professional development.

Even so, always go into professional development with a positive attitude. Even in the activities that you feel are worthless, there could be a small morsel of information that can change the whole way you teach. Here's one example. : I took a higher level questioning class in college and recently attended a mandatory professional development session on questioning. We discussed Bloom's Taxonomy, which I had been drilled to death on in school. However, when we discussed wait time, the instructor told us to watch the clock as we calculated the wait time we gave to our students. Generally, even when teachers believe they are giving an appropriate response time, they only wait several seconds. Thanks to this professional development session---an hour of information I was already familiar with, I DID learn how to get more fleshed out answers from my students, due to actually watching the clock rather than rushing students through their answers.

Professionals in any environment must continue to grow and develop in their skills in order to continue to be successful. Spending time learning will enable you to best meet the needs of your diverse student population. Invest a little time today thinking about what you would like to learn more about professionally. Set your plan into action by creating a plan for how to incorporate changes into your own classroom setting.

DR. MILBY



## PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

**Feelings of Isolation:** Feeling lonesome, anxious, and alone in a classroom with limited resources and accessible assistance. Having no clear-cut recipe or "how to do it" guide to manage an unexpected problem; and fear of appearing incompetent to peers.

**Ask yourself:** What forms of support do you have as a new teacher? How are you dealing with isolation and stress in your job?

### Suggested use for this module:

#### 1. Analyze:

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

#### 2. View:

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

#### 3. Compare:

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

#### 4. Reflect:

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

#### 5. Apply:

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

### Scenarios 1 & 2: Feelings of Isolation

#### Scenario 1:

Beth stated, "I'm exhausted and being so tired is actually affecting my performance in the classroom. I've started to notice that by the end of the week I was getting to a point where I was not functioning very well since I am running low on fuel. Things are getting to me that wouldn't have bothered me so much on Monday."

I noticed that the behavior of the kids has also been an issue. By the end of the week, things that I would have dealt with one way on Monday are escalating. I get so exhausted that the kids wind me up and this creates more stress as time goes along."

Consider this quote from Beth. How are her feelings influencing students? What suggestions do you have for her to improve her experiences?

### **Scenario 2:**

Todd confessed, "What really gets to me more than anything else is not being able to take a break all day long. I have so many duties during lunch and planning time that I can hardly gobble down my sandwich and coffee. I shuffle down the hallways at a ridiculous speed trying to accomplish everything. I am beginning to feel like I live inside of my classroom."

Consider this quote from Todd. How is he coping with his responsibilities? What suggestions do you have to help him improve his situation?

**Circle the scenario that you selected below:**

**Scenario 1**

**Scenario 2**

**Record a list of your own possible solutions here:**

**Summary & Goal Setting:**



## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Feelings of isolation and coping with stress are all normal parts of teaching. Teaching is a demanding profession which requires mental and physical strategies for tackling job stress. The first solution for most beginning teachers is to recognize your accomplishments and celebrate small successes. Conduct continuous self-evaluations and reevaluating what adjustments should be made in your teaching. Take on one thing to work on at a time. Remember, it gets much easier with time once you have established a repertoire of techniques for dealing with difficult situations. Your teaching mentor or another trusted teacher can help you cope and feel less isolated. Don't be afraid to talk to other teachers for support!

**Here are 10 tips to help you rejuvenate and bring back your passion for teaching:**

1. See the humorous side of the situation and take yourself less seriously
2. Do things for others
3. Talk to other people and seek opportunities for social support
4. Let go of being perfect- be honest with yourself and others
5. Develop healthy habits:
  - Rest and take breaks, stretch
  - Allow yourself to relax
  - Use deep breathing
  - Get more sleep
  - Eat more nutritious meals
  - Exercise
  - Avoid excess (including alcohol)
6. Delegate and learn to say 'no'
7. Stop solving everything for everyone
8. Find balance
  - Ask yourself: What hours do I teach? How much time does it take me to prepare and grade?
  - What time do I need for myself? What are my own personal commitments?
9. When things are not going well, reflect on the reason why. Don't be too hard on yourself. Learn from the experience and change it the next time. Seek professional growth opportunities such as

conferences, book chats, and websites to reconnect with other teacher who are experiencing similar problems

10. Celebrate and find joy in your career path. You are making such a difference for student's everyday! Believe in yourself!

## ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ❖ Beginning teachers contribute to their own isolation when they hesitate to ask for help. Many consider seeking help an admission of failure and incompetence. In fact, beginning teachers studied by Newberry (1978) went to great lengths to cover up serious problems with student discipline.

Gordon, Stephen. & Maxey, Susan. (2000). *How to help beginning teachers succeed*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/23/95/64.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/23/95/64.pdf) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED34166)

- ❖ It is critical for new teachers to surround themselves with exemplary experienced colleagues. In most schools, teachers work in settings where the sociocultural context, if not the actual physical structure, encourages little interaction among adults and can contribute to feelings of isolation and frustration. This can limit a new teacher's maturation and stifle professional growth.

Hicks, Cathy, Glasglow, Neal & McNary, Sarah. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, p.10.

- ❖ Isolation is a widespread and chronic problem among teachers. It is related to stress overload, stagnation, and burnout. Isolation is not restricted to particular types of schools or levels of education.

Gaikwad, Samuel & Brantley, Paul. (1992). *Teacher isolation: loneliness in the classroom*. Adventist Education. p. 14.

- ❖ Strategies for alleviating teacher isolation include developing a climate of trust within the school, sharing decision-making power, and using professional development activities to improve communication and team-building skills among teachers. Additional strategies to consider include forming quality circles or other problem-solving committees, presenting meetings focused on the daily activities of staff members, requiring peer observation, increasing opportunities for staff social activities, encouraging attendance at professional meetings, conducting retreats for sharing values and attitudes, and planning regular informal meetings to discuss teaching techniques or new ideas gleaned from the professional literature.

Rothbert, Robert. (1985). *Improving school climate and reducing teacher isolation*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 270855)

- ❖ Isolation comes in several forms:
  - Egg-crate isolation refers to a physical separateness where teachers have little contact with other professionals
  - Psychological isolation is a state of mind rather than a condition of the workplace. It involves the teacher's perceptions of collegial interactions.
  - Adaptive isolation occurs when teachers are unable to meet the demands of adapting to new teaching strategies. They feel overwhelmed in trying to acquire new strategies.

Gaikwad, Samuel & Brantley, Paul. (1992). *Teacher isolation: loneliness in the classroom*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/jae199254041404.pdf>

- ❖ In response to a high rate of attrition, many state education associations have begun to focus on solving the problem of teacher isolation through formal mentoring programs.

Heider, Kelly. (2005). *Teacher isolation: how mentoring programs can help*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number14/index.html>

- ❖ Studies have shown that mentoring programs such as telementoring, mentoring by a veteran teacher, novice teacher learning communities, and peer coaching help keep new teachers motivated and enthusiastic while increasing their skills and self-efficacy.

Heider, Kelly. (2005). *Teacher isolation: how mentoring programs can help*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number14/index.html>

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